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4 JUNE 1982

Weinberger Confirms New Strategy on Atom War

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 3 — Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger acknowledged today that the Reagan Administration had adopted a strategy for fighting a protracted nuclear war and defended it as necessary to deter an attack from the Soviet Union.

Mr. Weinberger, in an address at the Army War College in Carlisle Barracks, Pa., said having the ability to fight a prolonged nuclear war would give the President a variety of options to prevent the Soviet Union from exercising nuclear blackmail.

According to a text made available here, Mr. Weinberger also denied that the Administration had adopted the view that a nuclear war could be won. Later a senior official in the Defense Department, briefing reporters, reinforced Mr. Weinberger's remarks.

The Weinberger comments, inserted into a speech to a gathering of senior Army officers and civilian guests at a seminar on national security, represented the Reagan Administration's first public reaction to articles in The New York Times and other publications about the Defense Department's new five-year military strategy.

The Secretary, who approved the classified document known as a defense guidance about two months ago, said in a covering memorandum that it was the first such document of this Administration. It laid the strategic foundation on which the military services are to base their budget requests for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, 1983.

Running through the document's sections on nuclear war was the theme that the United States must be prepared for a protracted conflict, as opposed to the concentrated, all-out exchanges considered more likely by many military specialists.

"The United States nuclear capabilities must prevail even under the condition of a prolonged war," the defense guidance said. The armed forces must have enough offensive nuclear ability "so that the United States would never emerge from a nuclear war without nuclear weapons while still threatened by enemy nuclear weapons," it said.

Nuclear War Not 'Winnable'

In another section, the document said American nuclear forces "must prevail and be able to force the Soviet Union to seek earliest termination of hostilities on terms favorable to the United States."

In his speech today, however, Mr. Weinberger asserted that nowhere in President Reagan's \$180 billion program to revitalize the nuclear deterrent "do we mean to imply that nuclear war is winnable." That program, announced in October, calls for new missiles and bombers and communications to control them.

"This notion has no place in our strategy," he said. "We see nuclear weapons only as a way of discouraging the Soviets from thinking that they could ever resort to them."

"That is exactly why we must have a capability for a 'protracted' response—to demonstrate that our strategic forces could survive Soviet strikes over an extended, that is to say, protracted period," he said. "Thus we believe we could deter any attack."

"Otherwise," Mr. Weinberger continued, "we would be tempting them to employ nuclear weapons to try to blackmail us. In short, we cannot afford to place ourselves in the position where the vulnerability of our deterrent would force the President to choose between using our strategic response before they were destroyed or surrendering. Those

who object to a policy that would strengthen our deterrent, then, would force us into a more dangerous, hair-trigger posture.

Says Press Maligns Strategy

"Our entire strategic program, including the development of a protracted response capability that has been so maligned in the press recently, has been developed with the express intention of assuring that nuclear war will never be fought."

The Secretary did not specify articles that he believed had maligned the strategy, nor did the senior Defense Department official briefing the press later. That official, however, complained that some policies had been misrepresented by short quotes taken from a long text.

Mr. Weinberger asserted that President Reagan's program would provide the "leverage we require to induce the Soviets to participate in meaningful arms control negotiations."

The senior Pentagon official said later that publication of the defense guidance had cast doubts on the Administration's sincerity in seeking talks on arms reductions but that Mr. Reagan would be able to restore confidence during his trip to Europe.